

Wellesley Natural Resources Commission

GREEN WELLESLEY CAMPAIGN

What is a rain garden?

Rain gardens attract birds and butterflies, and help to protect streams, lakes and ponds. These gardens are planted with perennial flowers, shrubs, trees and grasses that are easy to maintain and thrive without fertilizers and pesticides.

Rain gardens have a bowl-shape design that retains storm water for a few hours, allowing it to seep into the ground. This groundwater replenishes brooks and ponds between rain events and is essential to the health of stream life. On hot summer days, rain gardens will cool runoff from dark pavement by putting it into the ground. Rain garden plants and soils also cleanse storm water and remove nutrients that can harm water quality.

Gardens make yards more attractive and form mini-ecosystems you can enjoy watching. There is a wide array of plants that can be obtained from garden centers and home improvement stores to provide food and habitat for wildlife. Rain gardens can be placed in sunny or shady locations, and do best on well-drained soils.



Benefits of Rain Gardens

Storm runoff is a big problem in areas where forests and fields are replaced by streets, and other hard surfaces. This runoff can wash a toxic mix into catch basins that go directly into living streams. Stormwater problems are the leading cause of flooding and pollution that can damage property, contaminate water supplies, harm aquatic life, and spoil recreational uses of lakes and brooks.



Collecting and treating stormwater with rain gardens has vital water quality benefits:

- ☐ Reduces sand, silt, grease, oil and metals
- ☐ Plants remove phosphorus, nitrogen and other nutrients
- ☐ Microbes in mulch and soils lessen bacteria from street runoff

Many communities across the country are restoring healthy streams by installing rain gardens and similar runoff remedies. In addition to municipal projects, homeowners, businesses, schools and churches are adding rain gardens to renew the vitality of local waters. There are many Internet websites with guidance about rain gardens. For information on how to build a rain garden, please email or telephone the Massachusetts Watershed Coalition: mwc@commonwaters.org (978-534-0379).